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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ANKARA 008382

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [ECON](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY'S 58TH GOVERNMENT TAKES OFFICE

REF: A. A) ANKARA 8381

[B](#). B) ANKARA 8380

[C](#). C) ANKARA 8358

[D](#). D) ANKARA 8252

[E](#). E) ANKARA 8165

(U) Classified by DCM Robert Deutsch; reasons: 1.5 (b,d).

[1](#). (U) President Sezer's Nov. 18 approval of the AK Party government under P.M. Abdullah Gul (ref A; cabinet below, para 4) puts into place a government:

--committed to pursuing Turkey's EU candidacy and democratic reforms;

--open to working with the U.S. on key regional issues;

--focused on relieving the economic and social effects of Turkey's worst economic downturn since World War II but committed to working with the IMF;

--committed to obtaining restitution of party chairman Erdogan's political rights and opening the way for his appointment as P.M. within several months (ref B);

--determined to tackle widespread corruption and lack of transparency and responsiveness in Turkish governance; and

--ready to work with a wary Kemalist Establishment by placing experienced former high civil servants in key ministries.

[2](#). (U) P.M. Gul spent an unusually long time with Sezer before the latter approved the cabinet list, leading some journalists to speculate that Sezer either had doubts about some on the list or asked for changes. The cabinet has 25 members, a radical cut from the 38 in the previous government.

[3](#). (C) This cabinet is notable in five ways. First, the number of ministers with deep experience in the State, mostly in the governments of late P.M. and President Turgut Ozal, who are in charge of portfolios of neuralgic interest to the Deep State (ref C): defense, interior, justice, education. Second, the number of ministers with law degrees. Third, the number of men who are members of or have strong connections to Islamic brotherhoods (tarikats), principally the Naksibendis. Membership in a tarikats is by no means a sign of radicalism; indeed, the tarikats come from the mystical Sufi tradition long present in Anatolia and were an important channel between an isolated Ottoman court, civil organizations, and the population at large. Tarikats were officially banned by Ataturk in the mid-1920's but have never disappeared and have become more prominent again since the 1980 military coup and the Ozal governments of the 1980's. The number of members of the Naksibendi tarikats in the current cabinet is another sign that key cabinet members know one another well and work well together. Fourth, the number of ministers with some or good command of English. Fifth, the heavy Anatolian weight (to be expected), with strong representation from the heartland, the east, and some from the Black Sea region. The cabinet has one woman.

[4](#). (C) Bios:

--P.M. Abdullah Gul: see ref (A).

--Deputy P.M. Abdullatif Sener: see ref (D).

--Deputy P.M. Mehmet Ali Sahin: Born in the coal and iron and steel region of Karabuk in 1950. Graduated from Istanbul U. Faculty of Law. Practiced law as a private attorney.

Elected to Parliament in 1995 on the ticket of Islamist Refah Party of Necmettin Erbakan. Married with four children. An Embassy contact for several years.

--Deputy P.M. Ertugrul Yalcinbayar: Born in Haskoy 1946. Graduated from Istanbul U. Faculty of Law, where he was engaged in leftist politics. Private law practice. Reflecting his change to a more conservative and religiously-oriented line, elected to Parliament from Bursa on the Motherland Party (ANAP) ticket. Moved to the Islam-oriented Fazilet Party in 1999. Active advocate of changes to Turkish Penal Code Articles 8 and 312, which have severely restricted freedom of speech (Article 312 amended in August 2002). Served as chairman of parliamentary Constitutional Committee. Appointed general secretary of AK Party after the November 3, 2002 elections. Married with two children. A good Embassy contact for several years. Soft-spoken, with a conciliatory manner and a step-by-step approach.

--State Minister Mehmet Aydin: Born in Elazig in eastern Turkey 1943. Graduated from Ankara U. Faculty of Theology. Professor of theology at September 9 U. in Izmir.

--State Minister Besir Atalay: Born in Armutlu 1947. Graduated from Ankara U. Faculty of Law. Served as a department head in the State Planning Organization. A founder of Kirikkale U. and served as rector. Several years ago founded the ANAP polling and research center, which served as AK's polling arm before the elections with estimates close to the actual results. A founding member of AK. Married with three children. Speaks English. Good contact of Embassy for several years.

--State Minister for Economy Ali Babacan: see ref (D). Good contact of Embassy.

--State Minister for Foreign Trade Kursad Tuzmen: see ref (D). Long known to Embassy.

--Justice Minister Cemil Cicek: Born in Yozgat in central Anatolia in 1946. Graduated from Istanbul U. Faculty of Law 1971. Practiced law for 10 years and has an excellent reputation as a jurist. Entering politics as a founder of Turgut Ozal's ANAP, he was close to Ozal and served as Mayor of Yozgat during the early Ozal years (mid-1980's). A state minister in the ANAP governments of Ozal, Yildirim Akbulut and Mesut Yilmaz. Was driven from ANAP after a dispute with Yilmaz and served as an independent M.P. Member of parliamentary Constitutional Committee. Joined AK only a few months before the November elections. Married with three children. Speaks English and French. Good contact of Embassy. Probably a Naksibendi.

--Defense Minister Vecdi Gonul: Born in Erzincan in eastern Turkey 1939. Graduated from Ankara U. Political Sciences faculty (then the premier training ground for future high civil servants) 1962; earned an M.S. from University of Southern California. Joined the Interior Ministry; after service as an inspector and sub-governor, appointed governor of Kocaeli (Izmit), director general of security (National Police), governor of Ankara, governor of Izmir; was close to Turgut Ozal; a founding member of the High Education Council (YOK), Undersecretary of Interior Ministry under Minister Abdulkadir Aksu (see below); chairman of the Court of Accounts (Sayistay). Elected to Parliament 1999 on the ticket of Erbakan's Islam-oriented Fazilet Party. Joined AK in 2002. Married, three children. Speaks English. Long-time contact of the Embassy. Did his military service with President Sezer (a classic bonding experience). No base in AK's grass-roots. Considered an exemplar of Turkey's Deep State, and thus someone who will smoothly manage AK's relations with the Turkish military. Expected to be nominated by AK as its candidate for speaker of Parliament, but was brushed aside by party vice-chairman Bulent Arinc. Probably a Naksibendi.

--Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu: Born in Diyarbakir 1944. Of Kurdish origin. Graduated from Ankara U. Political Science Faculty. Joined Interior Ministry, served as Malatya police director, Kahramanmaraş deputy governor, deputy director general of security (National Police), Rize governor and mayor, Gaziantep governor. Entered politics with ANAP, elected to Parliament from Diyarbakir. Served as Interior Minister 1988-91. Married, two children. Speaks German. Long-time Embassy contact. Probably a Naksibendi.

--Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis: see ref (E).

--Finance Minister Kemal Unakitan: Born in Edirne 1946. Graduated from Ankara Economic and Commercial Sciences Academy. Worked in Finance Ministry and then in SEKA (State Cellulose Industry). Worked in private sector. Was a member of Al Baraka Turk and Family Finance Islamic banking financial organizations. A financial accountant. Close friend of Erdogan and was substituted for Erdogan on AK's Istanbul electoral list when Erdogan was barred from the elections. A Naksibendi of the Iskender Pasa branch like Erdogan, and took over Erdogan's tarikat duties when Erdogan entered politics.

--Education Minister Erkan Mumcu: Born in Yalvac (former Pisidian Antioch) in south-central Anatolia 1963. Graduated from Istanbul U. faculty of Law. Entered politics as a rising star in ANAP, elected to Parliament on ANAP ticket 1995 and 1999. Served as Minister of Tourism for first part of the Ecevit government. Resigned from ANAP in summer 2002 after long-running dispute with ANAP leader Yilmaz and joined AK. Married, two children. Speaks English. Long-standing contact of Embassy. Has been sharply critical of the Kemalist State for years. Seen as too openly ambitious by many.

--Public Works Minister Zeki Ergezen: Born in Ahlat (north shore of Lake Van) 1949. Graduated from Architecture Department of Ankara Academy of engineering and Architecture. Worked as provincial director for Public Works Ministry in Bitlis and Mus in eastern Turkey. Headed the construction department of the then-Rural Works Ministry and the construction and property department of the Turkish National Police. Elected to Parliament in 1995 on the Islamist Refah Party ticket and in 1999 on the Islam-oriented Fazilet Party ticket. Married, four children.

--Health Minister Recep Akdag: Born in Erzurum 1960. Graduated from Ataturk U. (Erzurum) Faculty of Medicine. Studied hematology in London 1991-92. Became a professor 1999. Worked in Ankara U. Pediatrics Department of Faculty of Medicine before entering Parliament in 2002. Married, five children. Speaks English.

--Transportation Minister Binali Yildirim: Born in Erzincan 1955. Graduated from Istanbul Technical U. Shipbuilding and Marine Sciences Faculty. M.A. from same faculty. 1978-93 served as director general of the Turkish shipbuilding industry and in different positions in the Camialti Dockyard. Attended IMO World Maritime U. in Sweden on safety issues. 1994-2000 served as director general of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Maritime Transportation Directorate. Married, three children. Speaks English and French.

--Agriculture Minister Sami Guclu: Born in Konya 1950. Graduated from Istanbul Faculty of Economy. After two years in private sector, joined the Turkish Agriculture Equipment Council Inspection Board. Served as assistant at the Sakarya State Academy of Engineering and Architecture 1976. Ph.D. from Istanbul U. Economics department 1980. Professor at Leicester U. in England 1985-86. Speaks English.

--Labor Minister Murat Basesgioglu: Born in Kastamonu 1955. Graduated from Istanbul U. Faculty of Law. Worked in private practice in Kastamonu for seven years. Entered politics in ANAP in 1984. Served as Minister of Interior in 1997-98 government of Mesut Yilmaz. Joined AK in summer 2002 at urging of Erkan Mumcu, with whom he is closely associated politically. Has reputation as a reformer. Married, two children. Contact of Embassy.

--Industry and Trade Minister Ali Coskun: see ref (D). Long-time Embassy contact. Possibly a Naksibendi.

--Energy Minister Hilmi Guler: see ref (D). Embassy contact.

--Culture Minister Huseyin Celik: Born in Gulpinar (Van) 1959. Graduated from Istanbul U. Faculty of Literature, Department of Turkish Language and Literature. Post-grad studies at the University of London. Chairman and staff member of Department of Turkish Language and Literature at Centennial U. (Van). Has also written history articles, including on the Armenian question. Elected to Parliament on the DYP ticket 1995. Joined Fazilet Party 1999. Joined AK when Fazilet was closed. Married, three children. Speaks English. Good contact of Embassy. Focused, sometimes intense, but good natured. Likes to pontificate. Has long urged restoration of the Armenian church on Akhdamar island

in Lake Van.

--Tourism Minister Guldal Aksit: The lone woman in cabinet. Born in Malatya 1960. Graduated from Istanbul U. Faculty of Law. Has worked as an attorney in Istanbul. Married. Speaks English.

--Forestry Minister Osman Pepe: Born in Akcaabat (Black Sea) 1954. Studied at Black Sea Technical U. Faculty of Machinery Faculty, graduated from Istanbul U. Faculty of Management. M.A. from same faculty. Mechanical engineer; freelance engineer and contractor. First elected to Parliament 1995; elected 1999 on Fazilet Party ticket. Married, four children. Reportedly speaks English.

--Environment Minister Imdat Sutluoglu: Born Ardesen (Black Sea) 1953. Graduated from Black Sea Technical U. Management and Economics Department. Earned an M.A. at the same university. Served as mayor of Ardesen. Speaks English.

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